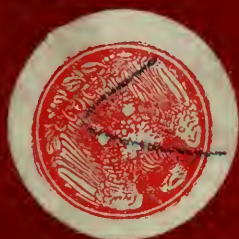


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ELEGIAC POEM

ON THE DEATH OF

NATHANIEL PEABODY ROGERS.

BY GEORGE S. BURLEIGH.

HARTFORD.

PUBLISHED AT THE CHARTER OAK OFFICE.

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ELEGIAC POEM.

O THOU, our dearest Brother,
Loved as we loved no other,
Best of the Good, and truest of the True—
Crowned by the wreathed love of a chosen few,
Could death strike thee and spare a thousand hearts
Less dear and high? Ah me! the hot tear starts
From the deep founts of agony
Wrung sternly out
By tyrannous Wo, who puts to utter rout
The smiles of love and soul-born admiration,—
Now all swept down in the full tide of grief,
As the swell'd torrent sweeps the autumnal leaf;

And only desolation
Mocks the once joyful world of love and life
 Within us, now that thou art gone.
 Ah wo! for the dark dawn
Of this our doom's-day, turbulent with the strife
Of bandit Sorrows, that drive home the knife
Of massacre to the bosom of our joys,
 That like blithe Boys
 And red-lipp'd Girls laughed round thee,
 Delighted when they found thee—
Tracking thy meteor genius by its bright
Corruscant fires, with a most pure delight.

O Brother, can it be
That thy great Heart, all tremulous and warm
With its quick throbbings of Humanity,
 Is hushed in that pale form!
And shall we never see

The mild light of thy generous-beaming eye,
That flashed rebuke on holiest Tyranny,
And life on us?—never more feel the touch
Of that brave hand whose cunning skill could make
Old Wrong grow pale, and her dread temples quake,—
And from whose fingers only death could clutch
The magic weapon of thy glorious strength—
Thy PEN, more mighty than the bloody length
Of lance, or weight of keenest battle-steel?

Shall we no longer feel

The burning tide of thy free Thought, that came
Like inspiration from thy tongue of flame?

O, how could death in night eternal furl
The ever sweet smiles that were wont to curl
That beautiful lip, and light that soul-full eye?
We did not think thou would'st be left to die,—
Our fond hearts trusted that thy Brother-soul

Would have made captive to its sweet control,
Even the Tomb-King, as it captived ours ;
Or made him quail before its fire-armed powers,
As the old monster Wrong has quailed amid her
towers.

We saw thy Soul rise kindling as a star
Over the midnight of our world's decay,
Alone, though marsh-fires flashed along its way,
Which to the eye, that marked them from afar,
Seemed Brother-orbs, uprisen to constellate
The heavens of Truth, bright heralds of the day :
But only thou didst keep thy Kingly state,
In the high star-path, while thy seeming Peers
Who took bright glory from thy beams for years,
To their own narrow orbits sunk agen,
Red, poisoning vapors in the Bigot's fen.

Thy Soul was brilliant with a thousand beams ;

Wit, like the North-lights, quivered in its sky,
Inimitable ; and bright Poesy,
Freed from her fetters, wantoned like wild dreams,
 Around thy Kingly Thought ;
Truth bared her bosom to thy spirit's lips,
And gave thee strength to be her dearest child ;
Love, all the tenderness of a sister, taught
 To thy strong nature undefiled ;
High Justice armed thee with her iron whips,
And made thy soul to be as stern as mild ;
Truth-armored Satire, from thy genius, wrought
Arrows of lightning, and heaven-tempered blades,
To cleave the Evil in its ambuscades—
Law's cunning labyrinths, or the Temple's veil,—
Piercing grey Custom's rust-enammelled mail.
We saw thee fling thy banner to the skies,
And storm Oppression in his Sanctuary,
Where the grim Horror, dragon-toothed, did bury
His scaly folds in sacerdotal robes,

And in feigned worship roll the burning globes
Of his devouring eyes
On all free hearts, to mark them for his prey,
While his jaws champ'd in human blood and clay ;
We saw the writhing of his serpent train,
As blood and fire leapt from his battered scales,
And thy brave hand let fly its blows again,
Like the quick bounding of a hundred flails
On the white sheaves of Autumn. Thus thy Soul
Of truth and valor, marshalled ours to war
Beside thee, battling for the holy law
Of Brotherhood, and Love's supreme control.

We shrunk not back, nor didst thou weary then ;
Nor cold distrust of heart-congeal'd men,
Nor the Oppressor's maskless hate, could make
Thy courage faint, or blunt thy beamy Pen.
Thy path was upward, like the eagle's ken ;

Though the false priest, for very terror's sake,
Threw venom round thee, like a trampled snake,
And muttered sorceries from his cloistered den—
But only found how well thou couldst disarm
His black-writ cabala of its deadly charm.

He could not harm thee, for thy manly tread
Was high above him, trampling down the shafts
Of his poor malice with a great undread
Of all his sulphuric terrors, even the red
Damnation bubbling in eternal draughts,
From his god's heart of hatred. Thou didst know
That love, the pure love of Humanity
Was stronger far and more divinely high,
Than all the monsters of all monstrous creeds—
Baäl, or Mammon, or the Almighty Foe,
Whose dark law sanctifies the damning deeds
Of War and Slavery, and the plundering

Of man by his strong brother. In the wreck
Of Faiths and old Lies, thou didst ever cling
With an unwavering fortitude to this
High truth, 'Where man is there the *true God is* ;'
That the One Soul, alive in everything,
Joyous in all, delighteth most to deck
Its viewless Being in the visible form
Of Man, whose heart with higher love beats warm,
And thus is holiest, fitting most to be
The only shrine and fane of Deity.

While solemn troops, heart-wasted at the sin
And wrong and wo, too long man's evil dower,
Troubled the blank air with their clamorous din
In helpless asking of the unhelping Power
Who bids man *do* or suffer, thou didst see
That their vain prayers fell idly back, and man
Groaned on beneath his hallowed tyranny,

And only deepened his primeval ban ;

Then was it that thy soul began

To toss old fetters from it, and be free ;

Then did it dare

To speak the Gospel of Humanity,

And turn to *action* the weak *words* of prayer.

Then didst thou lower the lifted eye

And look *around* thee for the Spirit of Love,

Nor waste thy heart on the blue sky

Where the crowned Hate sits scowling from above.

A hundred years shall find thy growing Thought

A flaming pillar in the midnight march

Of Man to Freedom, lighting the dark arch

And desert path through which his way is sought—

A hundred years, and yet thy name shall be

Life to the flagging pulses of the Free,

And Love's unquenchable torch shall light thy
memory.

Onward before the plodding march of them
Who hailed thee Brother in the opening strife,
Thy Soul went flashing like a heaven-lit gem
On the high forehead of Earth's Better Life.

Sowing the seeds of love and truth and right,
Thou knewest well what harvest would be thine—
Hatred and terror, and the opposing might
Of the strong robber, in whose cruel sight
Mercy is crime, and blood as sparkling wine ;
And against him and his pale Sanctifier,
While keenly conscious of the lightest touch,
Thy Soul was armed with fortitude divine
To bear their shafts, still pressing high and higher
Above their scorn, though thy large heart was such,
It had gladlier chimed with them in one sweet choir
Of human Brotherhood. But they were deaf
And blind to the deep wrongs of suffering man ;

While thy bared nerves were thrilling with his grief,
They could not feel, till thy rebukings ran
Like lightning through their temples, and the steel
Of their mailed bosoms ; then they roused to hate
And fear and tremble, but awoke too late
To stay the bolts that made their altars reel.

Ah wo !

That while thy gallant hand
Whirl'd fast its flashing brand
Against the many-visaged foe—

The cunning Tyrant throned in every land,—
A trusted Brother should have dealt the blow
Whose rankling poison laid our dearest Champion
low !

One from his couch of sloth and pampered ease,
Plucked the soft feather for the wingéd dart ;
And even a *Woman* dipt in her own heart

The shaft for venom in the bloody lecs
Of its cool malice ; He, who till that hour
Had felt thy pulses in his bosom bound,
Sped the keen arrow from whose treacherous wound
Thy open heart poured out its dear life to the ground.

Ah me ! returning faith shall never purge
That murder-stain from his immortal glory,
All that the love of myriad hearts can urge
Shall leave this blot on his divinest story.
But for thyself alone, what now avails
Thy great forgiveness ? Years of misery,
Even in the applause of Freedom's victory,
Could not appease his own dread Arbiter,
When the roused heart shall shake the bigot scales
From its blind vision, and old loves recur
To sting as they cheered once thy brave co-warrior.
Not all the fires that blast remorseful vice

Can ever pierce their stolid fronts of iron
Who, joined with him, in vulgar cowardice
Shook their base heels against our dying Lion.

Yet God forgive them even as thou forgave ;
We will not mar the green rest of thy grave
With any hate, even for those who slew thee—
They wist not what they did, they *never knew* thee.
But we will weep, for thou hast left us lonely,
No heart like thine could cheer us on our way,
Thou the severest, lovliest, the Only,
Thou foremost star in Freedom's coming day.
Our gathering band of Brothers, one by one,
Come and look sadly to thy vacant place,
Where the distaindest outcast of our race,
Had once a brave, full-hearted Champion.
And streaming eyes, and lips that only quiver,
Give their unspeakable Sorrow at the thought

That we shall hear thy voice no more forever,
Sounding its startling fire-words to deliver
Trampled Humanity—great words that taught
Hope to the wronged, and terror to the wronger,
Making the frailest heart of suffering stronger.

Our grief is deep, and deeper yet for this,
That ours is not the deepest; thy dear flock
To whom thy hand was bounty, and thy kiss
Love-fraught was gladness, and thy strength a rock,
Around one widowed heart defenceless droop
Like frosted flowers round their shivered stem,
Their homeless Love-thoughts, in a famished troop,
Back to their hearts recoil and feed on them.

Yet gentle weepers, we will share your grief,
Nor mock your spirits with a vain relief;

Here, as thronged Pities gather
Round the last home of a loved Friend and Father,
Our arms of fond remembrances shall press
All *his*, with him, to our hearts, in faithful tenderness.

There is a power in Music's voice to dull
The sting of death, and sorrow's keener pang;
And ye are songsters, sweet as ever sang
In woody vallies, where the veiled Bul-bul
Makes Night enamored, and the serpent's fang
Droop venomless—O wake its potent charm,
And your great sorrow of its sting disarm;
Breathe, fair-haired Sister-Band, a song of love
And memory—softer than the Nightingale's—
Sad as the lone hymn of the Mourning Dove,
That far in secret to the low wind wails;
Sing, if the full heart can be pour'd in song;
And the deep music on its tide shall bear

The oppressive weight of woe that lingers there,
As waters sweep the choking leaves along,
That creeping frosts stripp'd off and showered down,
In windy Autumn. Death has stripp'd the fair
And sheltering branch whereon your life-hopes grew.
Struck with its frost, a moment sere and brown,
Shook the old greenness, then like dead leaves flew.
On your choked hearts, the fluttering hopes and joys
Of summer youth, fell, deadening their clear flow
To a deep sorrow and a muffled noise,
The tide and tone of a most bitter woe.
Sing for the dear love of your dear, loved Sire;
If aught can reach his viewless spirit now,
'Tis the sweet voices of his own sweet choir,
Who might put life beneath Death's pallid brow;
Haply the echo of your plaintive hymn,
May seem the murmur of his answering voice;
And oft, in moony calm, and twilight dim,
His smile may come to make your hearts rejoice.

And you, ye Brother-Band,
The Mountain Minstrels of his own dear land ;
Whom he led forth from solitude to be
Life, love, and wonder, and delight, the praise
Of two wide lands, a living Melody
In the loud clamor of these jarring days—
O lift your bird-like voices in a plaint
Of mellow agony, making all hearts faint
With overwhelming sweetness. Be the voice
Of their great grief who have no voice beside,
And of their want, who know not of their loss.
The Birds shall join you with a wailing noise,
And their pained breasts with heavy pinions beat,
For one whose nature was as free, and sweet,
And simple as their own. Old trees, that toss
Their great arms to the tempest in the pride
Of their stout hearts—forgetting to rejoice
In Spring or Summer, now that he is gone
Who loved them so, shall answer, sigh for sigh,

The winds that mourn him as they murmur by,
Telling their sorrows to the sighing corn.

The bounding Brooks in which his heart delighted,
The bright Cascades, that flash, and foam, and gleam
Like his own rushing thoughts, now that this beam
Is quenched, with which their joyous path was
 lighted,

Will muffle all their waters to a dull
Deep gurgle, faintly heard, low, sad and musical.

Sing, Mountain Minstrels, a most wild lament—
The very rocks that cap yon snowy peaks,
And the 'Old Man' to whom his touch hath lent
Life and a voice, shall join the song that speaks
His virtues, for they loved him well whose soul
Could make their granite, *Human*. The deep roll
Of thunder 'mid the mountains, clap on clap,
That make the hills rock like a tremulous wave,

Shall mourn his death, whose glowing utterance gave
Sharp peal for peal, to its most terrible bolts ;
The giant Winds that throng the awful Gap,
Where the wild North rolls back its mountain gate
To let them pass, when all its host revolts
Against the South-land—winds that sway the great
Tree-tops as he swayed human hearts, shall tame
Their loud voice to a low melodious sigh,
And o'er his grave for heavy sorrow die,
That they no more may fan his soul of flame.

Mute Nature mourns him, for his heart put life
Into her thousand forms, and gave them love,
Even while he struggled in the hottest strife
For Freedom, keeping his brave flag above
The reeling ranks, though shivered oft, and torn,
Still first and highest in the battle borne.

Sing, Mountain Minstrels : sadder yet
Than sighing winds, or waters choked with leaves,
Shall rise the wail, where human suffering grieves,
And human tears a Brother's grave shall wet.
O, breathe the sorrows of the sable thrall,
For whom his soul drew first its sword of fire,
In the great name of liberty for all;
Sing, and strong hearts shall quiver like the wire
Of some brave Harper, harping on his lyre.
Pale Prisoners, mourning over death to come,
Or joy and innocence long lost in crime,
Shall weep less bitterly for their evil doom,
Than for deep sorrow that the hungry tomb
Has hid a heart that loved them in the slime
Of their blood-guiltiness. This, their deeper gloom,
Shall hide awhile the horrid gallows-tree,
And his high heart, gone cold, be all that they shall
see.

One voice of love and hope is hushed in death—
Cold is the hand that led the freest Free !

One pang shall thrill through wide Humanity—
And Hate, struck dumb, shall hold her envious
breath

With one internal spasm of remorse,
And shivering, fear to touch his hallowed corse ;
Love's tears shall rain on her cold altar there,
Drenching its fireless ashes with vain grief ;
Mute suffering lift its agonizing prayer,
To the cold sky, in looks of new despair,
More hopeless of relief.

Sweet Poesy laments for her dear child,
By running streams,—on old familiar hills ;
In the rock-passes of the mountain-wild,
And where new death each silent valley fills.
Wit's borial light, that quivered from his lips,
And led its dance round Freedom's Northern Star,
Goes, pale and tremulous, to its last eclipse,

Slow fading out from its fantastic war,
Ray after ray, till into night it slips,
As the moon sheathes her reddened scimitar.

All Aspirations of the human soul,
Fire-winged to cleave the heavy clouds of wrong,
With drooping eyes around his coffin throng,
Who gave them life to search the Eternal Goal;
And banded Terrors, such as made the strong
Old heart of Tyranny shiver, and the Abysms
Of red-eyed Bigots quake, hang silent round
The arrowy Pen, on whose keen point they flew;
And o'er his cold heart, bending to the ground,
Droop the brave forms of dreadless Heroisms,
Drowning the brand from whose quenched flame
 they drew
The fire of their quick being; while disperst
By the swift beat of his retreating vans,

Pities, and Pangs, and Sorrows, that were nurst
On his life-blood, and Weepings such as erst
Rained for Jerusalem, fly o'er the lands,
Lighting on all mute Nature's hearts, and man's.

Sing, Mountain Minstrels, the sweet songs he loved—
The tender lays of want and pining wo,
That wail in your soft numbers, like the low
Plaint of an exiled Angel, who hath roved
In forlorn seeking for his home, so long,
That earth's despair hath *filled* his heavenly song :
Then tell the softened hearts, to pity moved,
That with such tones his own soft breast would heave,
When burning tongue and matchless pen, were vain
To cure the thrillings of his besom pain,
For suffering crowds his hand could not relieve.
Sing Freedom's battle-hymns, as ye have sung,
When the live words went crinkling, quick and hot,

Like Valor's lightning from each vollied tongue,
Till even cowards their pale fears forgot,
And swelled the surges of our charging cry,
With one full shout for Truth and Liberty !
Then He, whose spirit gave and caught the fire,
Shall hear the anthem in his home afar,
And answer back from Freedom's Martyr Choir,
While hand and voice uplifted, call us ' HIGHER,'
With tone and mien majestic as a star.

That waving hand shall be our summons still,
That voice of music lead us from above ;
Our dear Delight is victor over ill,
And lives, immortal in our deathless love ;
Lives in heroic goodness, and all deeds
Of valor done for pained Humanity ;
Lives in his own high words of Liberty,
That the free winds have scattered, like the seeds

Of an eternal trueness,—yet to be
A green-bowered shelter for the refugee
From every crumbling hold of death-struck Tyranny.

Let no vain sorrow deaden the quick beat
Of living sympathy—our champion *lives*,
And down our ranks the word of cheering gives,
Leading the charge on Slavery's last retreat.
Be the sole requiem o'er his fallen form,
The deep'ning thunder of our battle-storm;
The only tomb-lamp o'er his dust to shine,
The flash of falchions in our vanward line;
The sweetest tear on his green grave to fall,
A tear of love and sympathy for all;
And from his flag, that twines its shivered staff,
One signal draw,
To be our watch-word and his epitaph,—

“EXCELSIOR!”

NOTES.

One from his couch of sloth and pampered ease,
Plucked the soft feather for the wingèd dart.

Page 13.

No reader conversant with the history of the Anti-Slavery movement, and the heartless attack on Mr. ROGERS, by his former associates, will for a moment doubt who is meant in the text. But for others, it may be necessary to name that amateur Reformer and refined Gladiator, to whom Radicalism presents a field for pleasant recreation—a kind of intellectual cock-fight—Mr. EDMUND QUINCY; a man whose unfeeling and cruel treatment of his former friend, was as unprovoked as it was brutal.

And even a Woman, dipt in her own heart
The shaft for venom.—*Pages 13-14.*

On Maria Weston Chapman, more than on any soul besides, lies the deed, whose bitter treachery and malignant bigotry, hastened the death of our lamented Brother. With the unforgivingness of a savage—though a Non-Resistant in theory—she poisoned in secret the arrows which another shot, from which the sensitive and delicate nature of ROGERS received a death-wound.

He, who till that hour
Had felt thy pulses in his bosom bound,
Sped the keen arrow.—*Page 14.*

The love and admiration, almost boundless, which Mr. Rogers felt for Mr. Garrison, and which seemed to be reciprocated, so fully that the latter spoke of themselves as the Siamese Twins, could yet be no security against the envy and hate of his friend, when a poor question of policy, touching the *forms* of Anti-Slavery action, divided their opinions. What a terrible revulsion must a nature like that of

Mr. Rogers experience, when the twin-brother of his heart started up an unrelenting Foe, pouring fierce denunciations upon him, from the treasures of that immaculate bosom that never forgave an enemy.

Let this be said in some extenuation for Mr. Garrison, that his strong nature, so long used to the stern weapons of destructiveness, did in blindness, what his better heart would have revolted at.

Breathe, fair-haired Sister-Band, a song of love.

Page 17.

The lovely children of Mr. Rogers inherit the fine musical gift which he possessed. Three of the sisters, with a brother, have charmed the public with the sweet harmony of their voices, as all who know them in private life, have been charmed by the loving simplicity of their hearts. Yet not the innocent sweetness of the children, could wring a kindly notice from the unenviable few who flung their shafts at the Father.

And you, ye Brother-band—*Page 19.*

The Hutchinsons—that ‘nest of Brothers with a Sister in it.’ Mr. Rogers was first to predict their popularity, and lend them encouragement, in terms which seemed extravagant to many; but the love and admiration of two worlds has set the seal of truth upon his predictions. Here, as elsewhere, his quick perceptions, and most delicate taste, saw at a glance, what slower natures reach after long searching.

And the “Old Man” to whom his touch hath lent Life and a soul—*Page 20.*

The “Old Man of the Mountain,” a picturesque cliff at the Franconia Notch. The well-known and admirable letters in the character of this ‘Old Man’ were from the pen of Mr. Rogers. These, like many of his writings, abound in grand and graphic descriptions of New Hampshire scenery—wild, bold and full of poetry as the cliffs and woods themselves.

"Excelsior."

The fitting and heroic motto of that fearless advocate of Progression, The Herald of Freedom, whose *excelsior* character, won for itself and its brave Editor, the hate and envy of slower-visioned men.

FINIS.



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